

# Foote Mineral Company

**EPA Region 3**

Pennsylvania

Chester County

East Whiteland Township

**EPA ID#** PAD077087989

**7th** Congressional District

**Last Update:**

August 2002

**Other Names:** None

## Current Site Status

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing the cleanup of the Foote Mineral site. Currently, Cyprus Foote Mineral Co. has completed the majority of field work to gather data about site contamination. It is anticipated that all necessary site studies and reports will be completed by the end of 2002. We also expect to decide on the cleanup methods for the site by the end of 2002. In 1998, to remove a community nuisance hazard, the buildings that remained standing on site were demolished and removed. Also in 1998, the Foote Mineral property was sold to Frazer-Exton Development, L.L.C., which will complete the work started by Cyprus Foote Mineral. In November 2001 a previously unsuspected contaminant, bromate, was detected in the groundwater downgradient of the former Foote property. Sampling revealed that some previously uncontaminated wells had become unsafe, likely due to shifting groundwater patterns caused by the current multiyear drought conditions. Bottled water has been supplied to those well owners and connections to public water are being arranged.

# Site Description

The Foote Mineral Co. site is located on a 79-acre property primarily in East Whiteland Township, Pennsylvania. Foote used the site to make lithium chemicals, process lithium metal and other ores, and develop inorganic fluxes for the metal industry. Ores and minerals were also crushed and sized as part of site operations. When the plant closed in 1991, the site included two quarries, a pit used to burn solvents, a lined basin and more than 50 buildings and process areas. There were also three unlined lagoons that have been leveled and backfilled, and an area where a small amount of neutralized lithium arsenite was buried and later removed. The site is bordered by public roads, mixed commercial and agricultural properties, railroad tracks, and an electric utility substation. Public and private wells within four miles of the site supply drinking water to approximately 42,300 people. The nearest of these wells is 800 feet away, and in the path of underground water that flows through the site.

## Site Responsibility

Cleanup of this site is the responsibility of Federal and State governments, and parties potentially responsible for site contamination (PRPs).

## NPL Listing History

Our country's most serious uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites can be cleaned using federal money. To be eligible for federal cleanup money, a site must be put on the National Priorities List (NPL). This site was proposed to the NPL on February 7, 1992 and formally added to the list on October 14, 1992.

# Threats and Contaminants

The primary contaminants of concern at this site are lithium, boron and chromium which, can also be found at low levels in nature. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs), the chemical components of solvents, and other organics have also been found at Foote, but have not traveled off of the property. Soil in some areas of the property is contaminated with petroleum hydrocarbons. One of the quarries now contains an estimated 256,000 cubic yards of waste materials from the plant operations. On-site monitoring wells are contaminated with

VOCs and the heavy metals: lithium, chromium, arsenic, and antimony. Boron, lithium and chromium were also detected in off-site public and private wells. In November of 2001, a newly regulated contaminant, bromate, was detected in groundwater downgradient of the former Foote property; additional samples showed it to be present in some residential wells and in water on the property. People who ingest or come into direct contact with significant levels of contamination may risk harmful health effects.

Contaminant descriptions and associated risk factors are available on the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry, an arm of the CDC, web site at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/hazdat.html> 

## Cleanup Progress

The owners of the Foote Mineral Site have provided safe drinking water/or filters to people with contaminated wells. Ongoing testing has shown that the drinking water is now safe for these residents and all others near the site. In June 1990, Cyprus Foote Mineral Co., Inc. signed an EPA legal consent order agreeing to do work on the site. This work included a groundwater survey of the area, providing an alternate source of water for affected residents and five years of groundwater monitoring to ensure the continued safety of residential drinking water supplies. In 1992, Foote removed two underground storage tanks from the site. That same year, Foote excavated 15,000 cubic yards of soil that was possibly contaminated by leakage from an underground petroleum storage tank. This excavated soil was treated using bioremediation, a technique whereby living microorganisms break down the contamination. In September 1996, Foote signed another agreement with EPA. This time, Foote agreed to characterize the contamination problem and risks posed by the site, then develop workable options for cleaning it up. In 1998, the company paid to have the remaining on-site buildings demolished and removed, in order to take away the community nuisance hazard. Currently, the majority of field work is finished, except for some additional work planned to determine the extent of bromate. It is anticipated that all necessary site studies and reports will be completed by the end of 2002. We also expect to decide on the cleanup approach for the site by the end of 2002. In 1998 the Foote property was sold to a Frazer-Exton Development, L.L.C. which will complete the work started by Cyprus

Foote Mineral Company.

## Contacts

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Detailed public files (Administrative Record) on EPA's actions and decisions for this site can be examined at the following location:

Chester County Library

Kathy Stout, Director of Reference

400 Exton Square Parkway

Exton, PA 19341

610-280-2620

U.S. EPA Region III

6th Floor Docket Room

1650 Arch Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103

215-814-3157

Please call to schedule an appointment.